

Perspectives on Leadership – New Thinking for a New Generation

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We must change the way we feel about leadership

At the ripening age of 55 I have spent a great deal of time in the last 25 years either in leadership roles or helping people to fulfil their potential in leadership roles. It doesn't mean I have a better perspective than anyone else, but I am confident in the perspective I have.

For the first time I want to set out how I think concepts of leadership must evolve over the next ten years, including laying foundations relating to purpose, behaviours and measures. If you read my posts you will know that I write mostly about lawyers. This leadership series however is not specifically about lawyers, but about my ideas on leadership more generally.

This Part 1 piece is in effect an introduction to this work. There are then four additional posts to build on all the points I make below. My hope is to reveal in some detail how we should all consider ourselves capable of successfully fulfilling leadership roles by embracing a new sense of what leadership means and through this delivering a far more impactful contribution for our colleagues, our businesses, our families and our communities.

Before I begin I should indicate some of the conscious biases I am likely to reveal.

- I am convinced we are preoccupied with innovation when we should be preoccupied with adaptability. Generally we are not innovative. We like things to be as we like them. However innovation obviously happens. The key to our success and our well-being is not whether we can be individually innovative, but whether we can adapt when innovation happens.
- Leadership is not something that is reserved for those with significant status, although this can mean a greater opportunity to influence. Leadership needs to become more a state of mind, a way of thinking and a way of influencing. The less we tie leadership to hierarchy, the more influential we can become.
- Leadership is also much more about helping people achieve their potential than it is about hitting certain financial/strategic targets. However because we judge leaders by their success and therefore there must be empirical evidence of success, the easiest (laziest) measure is a financial measure, typically shareholder value. I do not think great leadership can be defined by such measures alone. Great leaders do so much more and we must therefore help them by finding the measures that will judge them more thoughtfully and in a more sophisticated way than a vapid rise in stock values. Measuring well-being for example ought to become a key measure of an institution's attractiveness to new recruits and in the retention of employees.
- Finally in this list of my conscious biases, leadership must carry an ethical endeavour. We must retain our humanity to be truly successful and therefore we must care for our colleagues, their families, our customers and our communities in a meaningful, measurable and sustainable way if we are to be considered successful leaders. Expediency is not a quality of leadership and never will be again.

There is so much I want to share in the following posts and I look forward to setting out these thoughts in a way that I hope means we can have a genuine debate about what sort of leadership we need and what sort of leaders we must become. I am particularly moved to write these pieces now because I believe leadership has lost its way in three mainstream areas of our society.

In the world of politics our leaders have resorted to slogans and to populist assertion rather than promoting the value of transparent principles guiding evidence-led policy. We have also lost the opportunity to be respectfully critical, so arguments are often based less on reasoned, reasonable discourse and much more on straightforward personal attacks and prejudice.

In the world of business, we have been seduced by short term success and shaped entire corporate strategy so that it is more aligned to stock-market reporting schedules than it is aligned to the needs of our colleagues, our customers and our communities. Short-termism allows a space where we can discard good ideas and good people too quickly. It also encourages a grab for wealth with little heed to heritage, sustainability or community.

In the world of the public sector, we have conflated the idea of market success with the understandable need for efficiency and accountability. However accountability in the public sector must put the needs of the people they serve at the heart of their purpose. Instead we are left with the grim, grinding relentlessness of reducing costs and then allowing accountability for inevitable shortcomings in service to be passed down the line from leaders to front-line staff. It is a shameful, bureaucratic abdication of what leadership truly means.

In all three worlds we have often lost what it means to lead and we are all the poorer for this deficit in every aspect of our lives. Three things have happened as a consequence and these consequences are magnified under the glare from the always judgemental spy-hole that is social media.

The first of these consequences is an unnecessarily high level of unhealthy cynicism where the assumption is that no-one is honourable or able to do the right thing. The second, perversely given the first point, is an over-reliance on easy sounding solutions rather than a willingness to engage with evidence and experts. The third is a propensity to be ever more tribal in outlook. If you are not one of us, you cannot understand us; if you cannot understand us you must be against us. It is a dystopian spiral.

We have reached a point when the cards are stacked against the generations to come. It is harder than at any time since the end of the Second World War to see how the baton will be passed with any expectation that the world will be a better place for our children and grandchildren given our efforts to date.

However I do not consider the situation to be hopeless, indeed far from it. I am very optimistic and positive about the quality of the people I work with every day. It now falls on each of us to own our potential and not to be occupied by our fears.

Having set the scene, I have written four additional posts which explore the following themes building into a comprehensive perspective on leadership:

- What should be the purpose of leadership today?
- What do we each have to do to make our leadership contribution?
- How do we measure the value of our contribution?
- How do we help each other fulfil our potential to lead?

I very much look forward to sharing these thoughts with you and to hearing your thoughts in return.



What should be the purpose of leadership today?

We all have a sense of what a leader is – perhaps a parent, a teacher, a police officer, a boss, a politician; but in our still male orientated world a leader is likely to be “strong” and “decisive”. Often they will be described as “ruthless”. It is quite hard not to feel excluded from this cohort when most weeks we are not decisive even about which colour bin needs to be put out for collection.

When thinking about leadership it is sometimes easy to focus on the characteristics of people we know in leadership roles and not to consider the purpose of leadership. When we focus on the people we can edit ourselves out of contention, but if we focus on leadership purpose we can more often see the role that we can play.

In this piece I want to start the conversation with you about your leadership purpose. When we understand your leadership purpose we can understand how we prioritise your efforts, how you will want to elevate certain behaviours and repress others, how you will seek support (and what for) and how you will measure success.

My great friend and world class business consultant Ciaran Fenton uses this phrase frequently “The purpose of leadership is to create an environment in which people can shine.” I love the phrase and often use it myself with people I work with, but it is still missing detail. I have ten indicators of purpose for leaders and I will share them with you below. Before I do so however I want to stress one thing; purpose in the end will be a deeply personal endeavour. There should not be a cookie-cutter approach to something which in the end defines a large part of how we judge our own self worth. My commentary in a way is therefore rather superfluous to the bigger overarching point which is that finding your purpose is critical.

1. In most leadership roles relevant for this piece you will be an employee. Key to your success therefore is the alignment of your purpose with the organisation’s purpose. Therefore what is your organisation’s purpose? How are you aligned to it? How are you making your contribution?
2. How do you embody your organisation’s purpose? Are you critical friend, evangelist, sceptic, supporter, instigator, recruiting sergeant? What role do you have and is this role the role your organisation wants you to play? If your role has multiple facets, how do you narrate the differences so we can all see what you are doing?
3. How do your personal values align and converge with your organisation’s purpose? What is the tension between your evangelism and your critical faculties? How will you note divergence to your organisation? How does this impact your personal effectiveness? How will you choose to influence for more convergence? When does divergence become untenable for you?
4. What is your purpose with each individual member of your team? Not just your direct reports, but the whole team? How are they aware of your purpose with them? Do they have an opportunity to influence you and to renegotiate that specific purpose? What are your boundaries in the relationship you want to have with them and for them with you? Crucially are you prepared* to be judged by the individual as to whether you have fulfilled your purpose with them? (*clue – the answer must be “yes”!)
5. What is your purpose for the team as a whole? How are they aware of your purpose with them? Do they have an opportunity to influence you and to renegotiate that specific purpose? What are your boundaries in the relationship you want to have with them and for them with you? Crucially are you prepared* to be judged by the team as to whether you have fulfilled your purpose with them? (*clue – the answer must be “yes”!)

6. So far so operational... Now it gets really tricky. You are undoubtedly an elite performer. By any measure (intellect, earning potential, role, influence, etc) you can make a difference. You are now a role model and that fact will only become more obvious to you and to others as your experience deepens and grows. Every day you are observed and your approach, your manner, your words, your actions will be judged, often copied. Do you consciously act? Are you self aware? You need to be to be truly influential to help you fulfil your purpose.
7. To lead is in part an opportunity to make a difference, to change something for the better, to leave your mark. Therefore the questions you must have an answer to are these:
 - a. What will be your significant, distinct and visible contribution to the success of the business?
 - b. What will be your significant, distinct and visible contribution to the careers of colleagues in the team?
 - c. What will be your significant, distinct and visible contribution to enhance the sustainable positive impact of the business on customers, suppliers, shareholders and local communities?
8. In all likelihood you will leave only one role into retirement, your last role. Every role before your last role will be a transition to your next new role. How will you leave? What will it say about you to those you leave behind and to those you are about to join? I don't mean in terms of redundancy or resignation or being head-hunted, I mean in terms of your demeanour, your behaviour or character. I would like you to leave with your head high, your confidence intact and your purpose fulfilled as far as you could take it with all the ability and opportunity at your disposal.
9. It is conceivable that career today could easily last from 21 to 70. Nearly fifty years of toil. It will be foolish and wrong to expect that your career can be a step-by-step rise up the ladder of success. You will fail at some things, in some places you will not fit in and at other times you may carry with you into a new role or relationship the scars from a previous role or relationship. This is the same you, the same brilliant, high potential person that you have always been and always will be. So when you are tempted to judge others harshly, pause and consider their journey. I doubt very much they are incompetent, or do not care, or dislike you. They have just found this moment to be harder than some before it. You are a leader, can you do more than criticise them? Can you help them?
10. Still reflecting on the near fifty year journey we are embarked upon, you will need time to think, time to rest, time to recover, time to recharge before going again. Be kind to yourself. Plan your breaks, take them and rest. Be honest about your needs, be an advocate for your well-being, be a role model for others to follow.
11. Finally, I ask you to reflect on this thought that one person saved from mental illness is a whole family saved from the anguish and uncertainty of seeing a loved one falter, a career potentially interrupted and the livelihoods of dependants put into doubt. Just one person influenced to look after themselves better is perhaps the greatest contribution you might ever make. Make that your purpose too. You are a leader after all.

What do we each have to do to make our leadership contribution?

Our leadership contribution is indelibly entwined with our leadership purpose and must be something that we can measure to be credible. In the next post I will describe how we can measure our contribution, but in this post I want to talk about how we actually go about making our contribution.

When the selection process is run and you are the leader you have the seat at the table and your fine words have been heard. The world waits for you to act. How should you act? I want to reference back at this point to my earlier remarks about acting consciously and purposefully; you are a role model for your leadership purpose and I want you to occupy this role as much as your energy permits. What follows are ten short points to help you make your leadership contribution:

1. Narrate what you do. As part of acting purposefully let others see and hear what you are doing and why. Explain your motive, the cause and the effect, note the outcome and comment on your effectiveness. Let others know what you want of yourself, so that they may know what to ask of themselves.
2. Get the basics right and encourage these disciplines in everyone (and I mean everyone). For example in respect of meetings:
 - a. Start meetings on time
 - b. Finish meetings on time
 - c. Always have an agenda
 - d. Chair meetings respectfully
 - e. Always follow up on actions

I know this is management 101, but that doesn't lessen its importance. Getting the basics right in respect of meetings, email, comm's generally and dealing with low level disruptive behaviour (to name just a few things) makes a huge difference.



3. Manage your time brilliantly. For example cancel meetings that are not with purpose, substitute yourself in meetings if the better contribution can be made by someone else and call people in person rather than adding to aimless email chains. However NEVER let your actions in such respects be interpreted as high-handed or arrogant. Always speak quietly, always explain, always respect, always listen in case you have got it wrong, and always be prepared to change your mind if you have got it wrong.
4. Be interested in the lives of the people around you. Each will have a complex hinterland of competing needs of which work is but a part. Their ability to perform is often determined by the way they can manage their individual competing needs. You do not have to be their friend, you should not seek to be their friend, but you can be concerned, you can be genuinely interested and you can support them to create the balance they need to be effective contributors at work. The always very impressive General Counsel at Shell, Donny Ching, has a memorable phrase, "Our colleagues very often hold the rice bowl for their families". Please therefore own the part you play in helping your colleagues to be valuable and effective.
5. Make decisions. Make decisions every day. Own the responsibility of decision making, but also own the consequences of your decisions. Be open to feedback, listen, explain and listen some

more. Your poor decisions are obviously not to be celebrated, but they will not undermine you if you have a reputation for listening. People want you to succeed, but they want to be involved, not separated from what you decide.

6. Make time to be thoughtful and therefore creative. Rushed leaders are rarely as thoughtful or creative as their talent would suggest they should be. Instead they react to what they hear, relying on instinct and (if they are honest) their personal assessment of the person asking them. Your duty as a leader is to act thoughtfully and consistently; you therefore need time to think. I will not believe you if you tell me that you only need three hours sleep a night, or you do your best thinking at 1am, or that you are such a great judge of people that you don't need to read what they send you. You are paid well, your duty is to be prepared, to have a clear plan, to communicate brilliantly, to manage people so they can be their best; if you do not make time to think you disrespect them and you disrespect your talent.
7. Linked to this point is that you need to give time to your colleagues too. Be present for them, not distracted by anything else that is going on for you. If you can create five minutes of calm, focussed attention, listening beautifully and asking questions that show you care, you will have a more valuable experience than 30 minutes interrupted by calls, papers you are half reading and your PA telling you that you need to see someone else waiting outside. More than this, you will also set the expectation for recipients of this level of attention and they will come better prepared and hungry to share their thoughts with you.
8. Every relationship matters. It is self-evident that executive colleagues will see more of you than your more junior team members, but every contribution matters and every person matters too. If they are part of your world be sure you know the part they play, respect it, value it and let them see that you care. People will never want to waste your time, but you must never make them feel, even inadvertently, that they might be wasting your time.
9. To make our contribution, to fulfil our purpose we will need a functioning and well utilised support network. Family and friendships are critical to your success. I am absolutely convinced of this and will happily argue my point with my last breath; for family and friendships to support you then you have to be willing to be vulnerable, to accept help and to value help. Hubris with people who care for you, by itself almost disqualifies you from being considered a true leader. In this space I will also include having an external mentor. This is about your personal support network keeping you at your best. Any argument against this casts doubt in my mind that you have been truly tested and if you want to fulfil your potential you are going to be tested time and time again.
10. Accepting that you will have days when you feel vulnerable and need help is perhaps the single biggest step you will make in your personal journey to leadership. Great leaders are vulnerable and find ways to build support around them. Poor leaders deny vulnerability and are ultimately undermined. However they are undermined not by their vulnerability, but by their failure to build support around them.

These ten points are not an exhaustive list and it is not a comprehensive view, but my belief is that the more we adhere to these ten points the more we increase the probability of delivering our leadership contribution and fulfilling our purpose.

How do we measure the value of our contribution?

The holy grail of value is often considered to be how we measure it. Too often value is asserted as if talent alone makes a difference. In this post I want to focus on the hard reality that talent alone is never enough. A difference has to be made and we must be able to describe how we can measure and articulate the value of that difference.

In a post like this describing how to measure value will seem necessarily simplistic, but I ask you to please consider the steps I describe and how they might apply to your world. Your world will be more complex than the examples I share, however I have never yet worked with a team that could not describe its value with certainty and confidence.

The key to this work is your clarity of purpose. There is no point having a purpose that does not envisage some aspect of change, and any change described sufficiently well can be measured. To measure a change we need to know the starting point and the end point or at least the direction of travel. As purpose is the key, it follows that if it is hard to measure value, it is very likely that the purpose will lack sufficient clarity. Leaders must be sure of their purpose before they embark on trying to measure their success.

That is the hypothesis, so let me spend a little time testing it for you by taking three different examples. While this series of posts on leadership is about leadership generally, as my work is predominantly with lawyers I will share examples about legal teams. The concepts however apply more widely as you will see. Each example below has been stripped back to offer a simple case study perspective, but each example is also real and has been delivered by teams we have worked with:

“My purpose is to improve our operational efficiency by 20% inside 12 months.”

The first requirement is to assess efficiency as it is currently.

Let us suppose this is a legal team in a large multi-national business. Activity analysis reveals the team manage 100 contract negotiations at any one time. The average length of a negotiation is three months (file opening to file closing). The cost of the team (annual aggregate salary plus add-ons) is £2m. The feedback from business colleagues is that they are 6 out of 10 satisfied with the service and their biggest concern is the length of the negotiation. The team's biggest concern is getting signed contracts back from the business.

We can assume, hypothetically, that all contracts have the same value. In reality of course that is unlikely to be the case and will result in other opportunities to create efficiency based on risk and value profiles. In the scenario suggested however there are at least 5 points to make that can contribute to this particular efficiency challenge.

- Each contract costs £5k to process (based on 3months' worth of the £2m divided by 100 contracts). If we just reduce the time to complete each contract by one week the cost per contract is reduced by over £400. Over the course of a full year, assuming 400 contracts in a year, the saving is over £160k.
- The one week saving is delivered initially by a significant discretionary effort by the team, but it is only sustainable over time if supported by an investment in infrastructure. The team has identified that a £50k investment in interactive contract templates will achieve a sustainable two week saving. A business case is made to take back some of the initial

saving to invest in the template project. It is projected to take six months to implement, but still delivering an additional £80k of verifiable efficiency improvement in the first year. Once the initial costs have been incurred there is a sustainable two week improvement for each subsequent year and a saving of £320k.

- Your colleagues in the finance team can also calculate improved profitability when income from the contracts is received sooner. Let them do the maths, but make sure you get the credit!
- You now re-run your feedback survey and the scores have moved from 6 out of 10 to 8 out of 10. The lesson being that delivering an efficiency saving with a positive business impact also enhances the reputation of the team.
- Finally you agree with the sales director that no contracts can be booked as completed (which triggers the sales team bonus) until the legal team are in receipt of a completed contract document from the sales team. Miraculously there is now a 100% return rate recorded.

“My purpose is to make a verifiable £5m cost saving on our P&L”

Savings can be achieved in a number of ways (see the first example above for one type of saving). In this example however I want to focus on savings that leverage a broader, often unseen contribution.

Most leaders know when good judgement has made a difference, but if that difference was to avoid something worse from happening (for example, settling a case that might be lost) is it possible to ascribe a value to that event in any meaningful way?

If it was a one-off event I think it falls under the category of that's your job. Ordinarily, in my view, this is not something to measure or celebrate. However what is worth noting is whether over time you have influenced a sustainable year-on-year reduction in costs.

This requires data and trends analysis. Compliance training is now a fully fledged business cost – whether it is in-house Health and Safety briefings, or induction training or training to meet specific new obligations for example in relation to Anti-Bribery and Corruption or Data Security.

As with the first example it is important to establish a baseline. Across the organisation what has been the cost of non-compliance with regulatory requirements in the last three years? Consider, for example, court sanctions (and related costs), regulatory fines (and related costs), days lost through employee injury, management costs related to internal investigations, external legal and consultancy fees on reports and advice, and the cost of training to date.

Take three years in turn and consider the aggregate cost, the elements that make up the total, the trends revealed and start to make some judgements.

In one team we worked with the cost of training in a broad range of compliance related matters on an annual basis was in excess of £2m and yet the cost of non-compliance had a steady upward trend. Was the training effectively stopping a bad situation from being even worse? Or was the training not terribly effective?

The leader sampled a cross section of the trained employees – what had they learned? What behaviours had changed? What difference had been made? From a small sample the results did not encourage. The training had ticked a box, but could not be said to have made a material difference.

The leader made a case to create a new pilot training programme that would set out, very specifically, to alter certain behaviours and to measure the impact of the training to see that behaviours had actually changed. In addition the leader set up a feedback loop so that those attending the new programme contributed to an ongoing redesign of the training.

The ambition was not to train everyone in the same way, but to create a number of compliance champions who would help monitor compliance and be a constructive resource for other colleagues on how best to comply. Teams were then incentivised to demonstrate their compliance as part of their annual performance plans.

The results were significantly improved and if extrapolated would result in the need for fewer training days (an annualised saving of £600k), fewer investigations (saving approximately £250k), and an external fees reduction over past years (of £300k).

By capturing the data and undertaking a straightforward trends analysis the leader had achieved an annual saving of approximately £1.15m. The following year there were no reportable failures, no investigations, no fines, the P&L improved as a result by more than £4m.

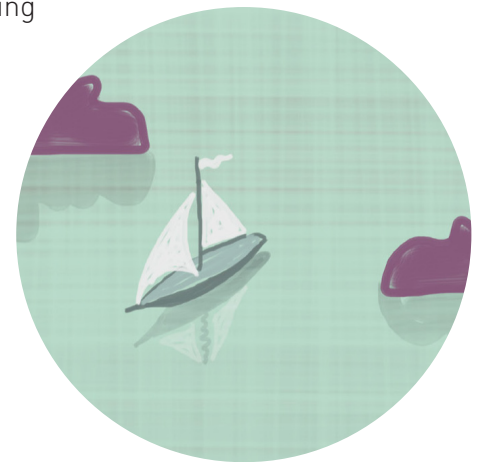
The investment needed was minimal, but the impact was a verifiable saving of £5m and the leader's purpose had been fulfilled.

“My purpose is to measurably improve the well-being of my team”

In the span of a career that will last decades and in the certain knowledge that one in four adults will at some point suffer from a diagnosable mental health issue, literally every leader can expect to face circumstances when colleagues are ill or at the very least inappropriately stressed at work.

It is possible to create a financial measure (around the cost of absence etc) but in essence this needs soft measures to be credible and the best measure is the perception of your colleagues, individually and collectively. Your baseline might be a simple on-line survey or a more sophisticated well-being audit. Whatever you choose to establish your baseline it is the responsibility of every leader to ensure they understand the well-being of their colleagues and in particular to be aware of any warning signs. Leaders must do all they can to ensure the workplace is neither causing nor exacerbating well-being issues.

The ten recommendations I set out below are somewhat generic, but they are recommendations that I believe should be in place for ALL teams regardless of size, sector, geography or experience.



1. Leaders should assess well-being in the team on a regular and frequent basis. Boundaries should be agreed and measures (formal and anecdotal) should be in place to assess progress and to warn of early signs of weakness or deterioration.
2. Leaders must have formal training to understand well-being and mental health indicators.
3. Leaders must lead by example and be self aware about the influence of their own behaviours...
4. It is critical to have an open, unsuspicious culture in which conversations are encouraged and where we keep an eye on our colleagues.
5. Flexible working must become the norm. Working from home when useful should be encouraged. Arrival and departure times in the office should be at the discretion of the employee and time off for family commitments should be promoted and encouraged.
6. Everyone in a leadership role should have a mentor. While you may be brilliant in every way it is healthy to realise that literally everyone is a temporary and replaceable component in a machine. While your interests align to the interests of the business all can seem great, but never lose sight of the fact that you are just passing through. You will be discarded at some point if you outgrow the role, if you fail to perform (whatever the reasons), if someone better comes along or if you wear out. For all these reasons, get a mentor. My strong recommendation is that your mentor is someone who is outside your world of work, but consider having a workplace mentor as well if that helps you. A mentor is not there to provide "tea and sympathy"; they should provide a safe place for you to talk openly and be an independent friendly sounding board. Someone who can gently challenge your status quo and your direction of travel. A place exclusively, selfishly for you.
7. Make changes if you have concerns. Talking is a good first step, but momentum comes from change and change encourages more change. Whether you make a temporary accommodation for an individual or introduce a change for everyone based on an assessment that it will improve well-being generally, it is important to follow the evidence before you and not to passively acquiesce in an environment that is having a negative impact on people.
8. The slightly discredited "Mindfulness" bandwagon may do the concept of mindfulness a disservice; however mindfulness techniques (including meditation, breathing, relaxation etc) are critical skills to practice. Do not be put off by trendy labels or overblown claims, explore what works, experiment and adopt.
9. Policies on recruitment, induction, appraisal and feedback should be reviewed in the context of well-being, adjusted as necessary and brought into line.
10. Finally, as a leader you are more likely than most to suffer at some point from a mental health issue. Whatever you do, however you feel, please never suffer in silence. Do whatever you can to find the courage to raise your concerns. You help others by helping yourself and you lead the way for them to act on their concerns too.

The survey or audit that created your baseline should then be repeated periodically. The differences then revealed are your measures to demonstrate that you are fulfilling your purpose.

How do we help each other fulfil our potential to lead?

In this final post in my Perspectives on Leadership Series I want to focus on how we support and encourage each other to fulfil our leadership potential. It is often said that leadership is a lonely role. It does not have to be like this; together we can find a much better way. I believe things are changing and I am delighted they are.

I passionately believe we need a new style of leadership and a new generation of leaders to take new concepts of leadership forward for the greater good of our colleagues, our families, our businesses and our communities.

It is my certain view that traditional ideas of leadership must change to meet the changing needs of a workforce that must work years longer and with less certainty than others have done before them in living memory.

I do not want to resort to cliché or caricature, but the system that produced an endless conveyor belt of predominantly alpha male, cult of personality egotists, driven by share-price and their own sense of feudal entitlement are over. The shadow they have cast may be long and stubborn, but it is over.

A new leadership style is essential and I am heartened to see it emerge and begin to take hold in the minds and actions of many more people than we might at first imagine would be the case. What I believe is now emerging, thankfully, is a leadership approach characterised by the following ideas:

1. First is an openness to the idea that we are all temporary contributors, coming together for a period of time, collaborating co-operatively for so long as our interests align. We can no longer bind people together with pseudo-Victorian ideas of “management knows best” or trust that somehow loyalty exists in any meaningful way (in either direction).
2. To manage people in this paradigm requires a strong sense of an engaging purpose so that the purpose (rather than the contract of employment) can become a rallying point for our endeavours. It means that communication must be rich, authentic and relevant to meet the interests of all concerned. It requires goals to be set that inspire our need to contribute. It crucially also means creating an environment in which colleagues are proud to be associated with each other and become advocates for brand and purpose.
3. Leaders will be most successful when they also learn to be comfortable with some level of vulnerability. When a leader accepts that they do not have all the answers AND is seen to accept that better answers than they have will emerge from the team, then the energy to find answers is heightened significantly. Hierarchies must therefore flex and be porous to allow ideas and people to move into spaces where they can shine.
4. The determination to be steadfast around purpose however must be accompanied by an equal determination to be flexible around delivery. To achieve this balance will be empowering for all concerned and will increase the probability of success.
5. The working environment you curate is now fundamental to your success. You know that the pay you can offer will rarely be enough by itself to retain people for long; you know that you cannot guarantee role security. Therefore how people feel about where they work, the



balance they have and the opportunities for growth they can enjoy are all about the environment you create and manage for them. When Ciaran Fenton says that it is the leader's primary responsibility to create an environment in which people can thrive, I think he will be seen to be ever more prescient with each passing year.

6. Leaders will be exemplary advocates for modern interpretations of flexible working, of taking meaningful breaks and creating time to share and be creative. They will put well-being at the heart of their plans for people and they will promote behaviours that demand we look out for each other.
7. This new sense of a collaborative leadership, within an organisation, with different colleagues stepping up at different times, requires a strong sense of investment in people so that they have the skills and confidence to succeed. Again I see colleagues becoming very comfortable trading some pay and some security for experiences and development that will equip them to work more effectively and to make an even more important contribution. The compact with each employee is that while we are all passing through, their time with you as their leader will be rich in new experiences, developmental, respectful and designed to give them a better chance to secure an even more important new role when they leave.
8. Leaders must have open and collaborative networks to support them. Traditionally a network is a latent resource activated when we are pissed off or sacked. Now networks must be active all the time and become places where we share ideas, learn from each other and support each other. Again it is a place to feel vulnerable sometimes, but it is also a place to share and contribute to support the vulnerability of others.
9. Leaders will also want to make a contribution beyond the world of work. Sabbaticals will be common place. Returning to learning institutions to improve expertise and feel intellectually stretched will also be expected and joining community projects to make a difference in our communities will be seen as part of the job.
10. I also anticipate much greater clarity between leader and team when holding each other to account for what they have each agreed to do. However what will signal a new way of thinking is that when things go wrong there will not be any sense of blaming for failure, but a genuine desire to improve, to share learning and try again.

Finally leaders will also be people who are passing through. There will be far fewer dynastic leaders hanging on until they have accumulated so many share options they can buy a small island. A leader's purpose should not be to stay in post as long as possible, but to maximise the opportunity to make a difference and then move on. While there is a risk of short-termism in such an approach, I am confident that the greater focus given to making a difference to lives of colleagues, their families and to have a focus on the interests of communities will ensure the balance between goals and sustainability is very well managed.

This is not some Pollyanna view from an aging hippy-lite left-leaning old softie. The reasons I am writing about these things now is because I observe these things now.

Nobody has a monopoly on wisdom, least of all me, but I am delighted that there are examples of new leadership that I have the privilege to see every day. In this regard I would like to mention a few people as I sign off on this series of leadership posts. I could literally mention a hundred people, and even then risk missing some names who should be included; but new thinking should have new emphasis, so in this my last few words on the subject I shall just mention a few brilliant women doing stunningly brilliant work. All are in leadership roles and all are reflecting, in different ways, something of the ideas I have shared in these posts. I would therefore like to thank:

Katherine Bellau, Sarah Booth, Claire Carless, Joanna Cheffins, Jo Day, Britt Guerrina, Rebecca Hilsenrath, Helen Jackson, Carolyn Kirby, Alice Marsden, Fiona Penhallurick, Fiona Smith, Kate Staples, Kim Stockdale and Suzanne Wise

...because you have inspired me.

Take care. Paul

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Paul', with a large, stylized initial 'P' and a flourish at the end.

Paul Gilbert – Biography



I was once a GC, now I help in-house lawyers around the world achieve their potential.

I am the Chief Executive of LBC Wise Counsel the specialist management consultancy for in-house legal teams.

We mentor individual lawyers; we create and run programmes to develop insight, skills and resilience; we have designed our own tech tools for activity analysis and we help individuals and teams describe purpose, contribution and value. I am also a presenter and author of a number of books and 100+ articles on themes such as soft skills, strategy and effectiveness for lawyers. Please see http://www.lbcwisecounsel.com/resources/articles/#.U_NjFvldWuk

LBC Wise Counsel was founded in 2000 and acts for in-house teams in the UK, continental Europe, South Africa and North America. We are the company behind the ground-breaking LBCambridge and LBCambridge2 programmes and the experimental #Lawfest event as well. Please see http://www.lbcwisecounsel.com/events-and-workshops/#.U_NjtvldWuk. On a personal note in the UK's 2015 General Election I stood as the official Labour candidate in Cheltenham.



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